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ACTION ARA-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-17 CIAE-00 C-01 DODE-00 HA-09 H-01
INRE-00 INR-01 L-03 ADS-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OMB-01
PA-01 PM-02 PRS-01 P-01 SNP-00 SP-00 SS-00
TRSE-00 T-01 USIE-00 /040W
-----809E1C 011732Z /38

P 011730Z DEC 92
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5841
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 12575

E.O.12356: DECL: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, VE
SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR THE LOCAL ELECTIONS IN THE
AFTERMATH OF THE COUP ATTEMPT

REF: CARACAS 12526

1. SUMMARY. FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE COUP ATTEMPT,
PRESIDENT PEREZ WAS DETERMINED THAT THE LOCAL ELECTIONS
OF 6 DECEMBER WOULD GO AHEAD AS SCHEDULED. CONCERNS,
HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN EXPRESSED AT THE LEGALITY OF HOLDING
ELECTIONS WHILE CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES REMAIN
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SUSPENDED. THE LEFTIST PARTIES FEAR THAT ACCION
DEMOCRATICA AND COPEI WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE
PREVAILING CLIMATE TO MANIPULATE THE VOTE. END SUMMARY.

CAP: "THE ELECTIONS AS PLANNED"

2. BOTH PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ AND GOVERNMENT
MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS WERE AT PAINS TO STRESS
THROUGHOUT THE COUP PERIOD THAT THE LOCAL ELECTIONS,
SCHEDULED FOR 6 DECEMBER, WOULD GO FORWARD, AS THE BEST

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
DATE/CASE ID: 08 AUG 2006 200503206

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WAY FOR THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR CHOICE OF DEMOCRACY OVER VIOLENCE AS A MEANS OF EFFECTING POLITICAL CHANGE. THE PRESIDENTIAL DECREE SUSPENDING CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES WAS ACCORDINGLY MODIFIED ON THE DAY AFTER THE COUP ATTEMPT TO PERMIT ELECTIONEERING TO PROCEED. IN A MAJOR ADDRESS ON THE COUP AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON SUNDAY, 29 NOVEMBER, CAP RETURNED TO THIS POINT, UNDERLINING HIS DETERMINATION THAT THE ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD AND STRESSING THAT THE SUSPENSION OF SOME CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES WOULD NOT BE AN IMPEDIMENT (REFTEL).

LEGAL DIFFICULTIES

3. DESPITE CAP'S ASSURANCES, THE LEGAL ANOMALY OF HOLDING ELECTIONS IN A STATE OF SUSPENSION OF CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES PROVOKED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN AMONG THE OPPOSITION PARTIES. THE DIRECTORATE (COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVES OF AD, COPEI, MAS, CAUSA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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R, AND INDEPENDENTS) OF THE SUPREME ELECTORAL COUNCIL DIRECTED AN UNANIMOUS APPEAL ON 30 NOVEMBER TO THE PRESIDENT TO "TOTALLY RESTORE CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO THAT THE ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD WITHOUT MISHAPS." THE CSE PRESIDENT ISIDRO MORALES PAUL STRESSED THAT THE RESTORATION OF FREEDOM OF TRAVEL AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION WERE OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE.

4. A STRONGER STANCE WAS TAKEN BY THE "FISCAL GENERAL" RAMON ESCOVAR SALOM WHOSE OFFICE COMBINES FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC PROSECUTOR AND OMBUDSMAN. ESCOVAR SALOM DECLARED THAT "IF THERE IS NOT A CLIMATE OF DEMOCRATIC LEGALITY, OF ABSOLUTE LEGALITY, I, AS FISCAL GENERAL, WILL OPPOSE THE ELECTIONS TAKING PLACE." IN HIS OPINION, THE HISTORY OF VENEZUELA DEMONSTRATED THAT THE SUSPENSION OF CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES WAS EXPLOITED FOR THE PURPOSES OF POLITICAL "DIRTY TRICKS."

THE LEFT COMPLAINS OF A "DIRTY WAR"

5. THE NEW CONVENTIONAL WISDOM IS THAT AD AND COPEI WILL PROFIT ELECTORALLY FROM THE FALL-OUT OF THE COUP

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ATTEMPT AND THE LEFTIST PARTIES WILL SUFFER. FROM HIS FIRST ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON THE MORNING OF THE COUP, CAP STRESSED THAT THE MILITARY INSURGENTS WERE BEING SUPPORTED BY LEFTIST SUBVERSIVES. NO ONE HAS DIRECTLY LINKED THE CONSTITUTIONAL LEFTIST PARTIES, SUCH AS CAUSA R OR MAS, WITH THE INSURGENCY, BUT A NUMBER OF CAUSA R AND MAS CANDIDATES HAVE BEEN DETAINED,

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INCLUDING IVAN COLMENARES, MAS CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR OF PORTUGUESA (THE POLLS HAVE HIM LEADING). WHILE THE LEFTIST PARTIES ARE CONDEMNING THE DETENTIONS AS DIRTY TRICKS BY AD, AD LEADERS SUCH AS DEPUTY PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL LUIS EMILIO RONDON HAVE BLITHELY DISMISSED THE ALLEGATIONS, ASSERTING THAT ANYONE DETAINED "MUST HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN LOOTING OR VANDALISM, OR IMPLICATED IN THE COUP ATTEMPT."

6. THE DEMOCRATIC LEFTIST PARTIES ARE CONCERNED ABOUT BEING PAINTED WITH THE TARRERUSH OF SUBVERSION. BUT THEY ALSO EXPRESS CONCERNS PUBLICLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO MAINTAIN THE STATE OF CONSTITUTIONAL

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 12575

E.O.12356: DECL: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, VE

SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR THE LOCAL ELECTIONS IN THE
SUSPENSION UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS IN ORDER TO
FACILITATE THE "DIRTY WAR" WHICH AD CANDIDATES HAVE
ALLEGEDLY BEEN WAGING AGAINST LEFTIST CANDIDATES.
CERTAINLY, AD CANDIDATES HAVE NOT BEEN HESITANT TO
PURSUE LEGAL TACTICS AGAINST THEIR OPPONENTS. BOTH
CAUSA R AND MAS CANDIDATES FOR GOVERNOR HAVE HAD
CHARGES OF MISUSE OF PUBLIC FUNDS FILED AGAINST THEM,
AND CAUSA R WAS UNABLE TO OBTAIN SEATS ON THE ELECTORAL
BOARDS IN THE STATE OF BOLIVAR WHERE THEY HAVE THE
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INCUMBENT GOVERNOR. THOUGH THEY HAVE NOT SAID SO
PUBLICLY, THE LEFTIST PARTIES CLEARLY FEAR THE
POSSIBILITY OF ELECTORAL FRAUD. ONE COMMENT IN A
SATIRICAL COLUMN HAD IT THAT THE ONLY THING PREVENTING
COPEI FROM COLLUDING WITH AD IN STEALING VOTES WAS
FINDING ENOUGH PARTY RANK-AND-FILE TO DO THE STEALING.

7. COMMENT. ASIDE FROM THE POSSIBILITIES OF OUTRIGHT
ELECTORAL FRAUD (WHICH HAS NOT BEEN A MAJOR PROBLEM IN
VENEZUELA), THERE APPEARS TO BE A REAL POSSIBILITY THAT
MAJOR PARTY "TRIUMPHALISM" IN THE COMING DAYS MAY LEAD
THEM TO VARIOUS ABUSES AND UNFAIR PRACTICES. IF
SUFFICIENTLY OBVIOUS, SUCH TACTICS COULD UNDERCUT THE
LEGITIMACY OF THE PROCESS AND THEREBY CONVERT A
TACTICAL VICTORY INTO A STRATEGIC DEFEAT.

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